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Sustainable development: International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Long-term data reveal a significant increase in the number of disasters, in their devastating impact on populations, and in their destruction of economic and social assets. During the reporting period, there were 404 disasters with nationwide consequences in 115 countries.

Member States and the partners of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction need to meet that challenge, in line with the directions of the Hyogo Framework for Action, and to substantially improve their capacity to spearhead, coordinate, implement and advocate disaster risk reduction activities. That will require upgraded national and local capacities to manage and reduce disaster risks, more systematic support from international and regional organizations, a strengthened Strategy system and innovative resourcing policies.

The present report provides an overview of the implementation of the Strategy and the Hyogo Framework for Action, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/195. It also responds to resolution 60/196 on natural disasters and vulnerability, and to resolution 59/232 on international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon.

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I. Trends in disasters and disaster risk reduction

1. Disasters continue to grow in number, devastating populations and destroying economic and social assets. Data recorded by the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters in Brussels show that during the period covered by the present report (June 2005 to May 2006), there were 404 disasters with nationwide consequences, an average of one per day. That is 25 per cent higher than the average for the preceding 10-year period (1995-2004). Altogether, 115 countries were affected and 93,000 people killed. The economic costs were 2.6 times the 10-year average, reaching $173 billion. The number of floods was nearly 50 per cent higher and accounted for 97 per cent of economic damages. Beyond those figures, the loss of family members, livelihoods and assets, the disruption of markets and local price increases; and damage to local environments and natural resources can create problems for affected communities that last for several years. Vulnerabilities are increasing owing to increased population pressure in urban and high-risk areas, coupled with environmental degradation, unsafe land-use practices, unplanned settlements and rapid urbanization.

2. Efforts to address the growing and complex problems of disasters and vulnerability to natural hazards are expanding, as described in the present report, in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters (A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 1). The 10-year plan for reducing disaster risks was adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan, in January 2005 and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/195.

3. Coordination and systematic cooperation among agencies is increasingly recognized as necessary to deal with the complexity of disaster reduction. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, as a system, is being strengthened to ensure such proactivity and coherence. But clearer targets and milestones are required to guide and monitor progress in disaster risk reduction, and more systematic resourcing is needed at all levels.

II. Enhanced efforts to reduce disaster risk and to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action

4. During the reporting period, important steps were taken towards the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. Within countries, governmental and non-governmental organizations strengthened their capacities to coordinate and implement disaster reduction activities while, regionally and internationally, Strategy stakeholders improved the strategies and mechanisms to stimulate and coordinate disaster reduction measures and to provide support to actors at different levels. The Strategy secretariat has supported those efforts, including through the development of guidelines for implementation and for reporting on progress.

5. The Hyogo Framework calls on States, regional and international organizations and the Strategy to undertake specific actions to ensure the implementation of its three strategic goals and five priority areas. The following section provides an overview of key achievements at the national, regional and international levels, including progress on strengthening the Strategy system and resource mobilization for disaster risk reduction.

6. A number of cross-cutting issues have been considered. More systematic engagement of civil society organizations is needed for the accelerated implementation of the Hyogo Framework. Women's needs, concerns and contributions to disaster risk reduction are often still neglected. Governments and organizations need to step up their promotion of gender mainstreaming and women's participation in decision-making in disaster risk reduction initiatives. Greater attention is needed to address the driving forces of vulnerability to hazards, such as land-use practices, unplanned settlements and rapid urbanization. Science and technology capabilities must be strengthened to understand, document and resolve those globally pervasive problems.

A. Action at the national level

7. States bear the primary responsibility for protecting their populations and managing resources to reduce disaster risks. The challenge is to put in place systematic capacities, such as laws, institutions, goals, budgets, skilled personnel, information and public awareness and participation, that measurably reduce disaster risks. The following action at the national level highlights ever faster progress by many Member States towards effective implementation of the Hyogo Framework. Already, 40 countries have reported concrete activities promoting disaster reduction in one or more of the five priority areas specified in the Framework. However, reports also reveal that a lack of resources (or a lack of willingness to allocate resources) remains an obstacle to the implementation of disaster risk reduction.

8. States are called upon by the Hyogo Framework to "Designate an appropriate national coordination mechanism for the implementation and follow-up of this Framework for Action, and communicate the information to the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction". That includes the establishment of multi-stakeholder national platforms[5] to address disaster risk reduction in a holistic way in the context of socio-economic development and to drive and monitor implementation of national commitments.

9. In addition, more than 60 Governments informed the Strategy secretariat of their officially designated focal points for implementation, follow-up and monitoring of progress related to the Hyogo Framework. These were:

(a) Africa: Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Comoros, the Congo, Djibouti, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe;

[5] National platform members include line ministries, national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, NGOs, the private sector, the media, academic institutions and, in some cases, donors and United Nations representatives.

(b) Americas: Barbados, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and the United States of America;

(c) Asia and the Pacific: Australia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, China, Georgia, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Sri Lanka and Yemen;

(d) Europe: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Iceland, Malta, Norway, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey and Ukraine.

Priority 1: disaster risk reduction as a priority with a strong institutional basis

10. Most of the reporting Governments acted on the first priority for action. Uganda mainstreamed disaster reduction into its Poverty Eradication Plan and prioritized disaster risk management among its development efforts; Djibouti designed a national strategy to achieve disaster reduction; and Nigeria organized a national summit to formulate a comprehensive policy on disaster management. Similarly, Sri Lanka developed a Road Map for Disaster Risk Management; Mongolia is finalizing its strategy and action plan for disaster protection; and Nepal designed a national strategy and comprehensive national plan on disaster reduction. Yemen established a national team for environmental management and disaster reduction; India set up the National Disaster Management Authority to assess and reduce disaster risks; Indonesia, learning from the 2004 tsunami, prepared a comprehensive disaster management law on response, risk mitigation and recovery for all hazards; and Pakistan has drafted legislation to set up a National Disaster Management Authority. Bolivia included disaster risk reduction in its national development plan; Cuba is implementing a policy of risk assessment in all its development initiatives; and Trinidad and Tobago is designing a national disaster risk reduction plan. Uruguay is supporting the establishment of new institutional and legislative arrangements for risk reduction.

11. National platforms actively pursued national advocacy and disaster risk reduction polices. In Kenya, for example, the national platform facilitated the finalization of national disaster reduction and fire management policies and started drafting a national land policy. In Madagascar, the national platform worked to increase national capacity and knowledge of disaster reduction. It provided training to district leaders, resulting in reduced human losses during recent cyclones. In Senegal, the newly established national platform facilitated the integration of disaster reduction measures into its poverty reduction strategy.

12. In China, a national 2005-2015 action plan for disaster reduction was formulated and integrated in the eleventh five-year national development plan. The Islamic Republic of Iran is exploring the hosting of a collaborative regional centre on seismic risk reduction. In Japan, in 2005, the national platform helped to develop an earthquake damage reduction strategy, aimed at halving estimated human and socio-economic losses over the next 10 years. The platform is promoting a nationwide movement to make disaster risk reduction the responsibility of every citizen.

13. In Argentina, the Ministry of Federal Planning, Public Investments and Services embarked on a two-year national programme to mainstream disaster risk reduction at the national, provincial and local levels as part of an overall Federal

Land-Use Planning Strategy. In El Salvador, authorities developed a National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction.

14. The Strategy secretariat convened regional meetings of national platforms in Nairobi in April 2005 and March 2006. Participants from 19 African national platforms discussed the strengthening of their partnerships with education ministries, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country offices and national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. They agreed to improve networking between national platforms and to assist one another in the integration of disaster risk reduction in primary and secondary school curricula. The next gathering of that nature will be held in Senegal.

Priority 2: risk assessment and early warning

15. Central Asian countries increased their seismic hazard monitoring capacity; the Cayman Islands formulated a national hazard mitigation policy and worked on a quantitative risk assessment project; and Panama is developing indicators to measure progress in the public and private sectors and by non-governmental organizations. Thailand set up a disaster warning system in six coastal regions; Mali carried out community risk analysis in three of its nine regions; and Maldives identified the islands most vulnerable to tsunamis. Ten African countries, located along the continent's eastern coast, strengthened their capacities in tsunami early warning and response systems.

Priority 3: building a culture of safety and resilience

16. Indonesia and Kazakhstan started to introduce disaster reduction in national school curricula; Senegal engaged the media in the promotion of risk reduction through training; India established disaster resource and disaster knowledge networks; China initiated a public awareness campaign, focusing on schools, communities and villages; and the education ministries of 10 East African countries are developing teacher manuals and textbooks for schoolchildren on tsunamis and other hazards. There are many examples of disaster risk reduction in graduate and postgraduate studies, such as those pursued by the University of the West Indies, in Jamaica.

Priority 4: reduction of underlying risk factors

17. Continuing shortcomings remain in priority 4, but some progress has been made: India created a training programme for safer construction and adopted guidelines for cyclone risk mitigation; Cuba and Grenada developed programmes for safer construction; the Lao People's Democratic Republic took action to integrate disaster reduction into environmental protection and natural resource conservation; and Indonesia (Simeulue Island) built on *smong* (tsunami-related) community knowledge in the design of local regulations and promoted environmental activities such as forest/mangrove conservation.

Priority 5: strengthened disaster preparedness and response

18. A variety of measures related to priority 5 were implemented: the Comoros finalized its national contingency plan; in China, nationwide systems and contingency plans were updated, ranging from the national to the county level; the Islamic Republic of Iran established provincial and municipal emergency operation

and coordination centres; Tajikistan is developing a national preparedness plan for emergency situations; and Pakistan, acknowledging the potential of volunteerism, instituted a national volunteer scheme after the 2005 earthquake to strengthen response and recovery capacities. Bolivia and Guatemala designed post-disaster recovery frameworks with risk reduction approaches, and Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica have initiatives to increase their preparedness and response capacity. The challenge remains to develop preparedness and early recovery capacities with risk reduction approaches.

B. Action at the regional level

19. Regional strategies and networks are being developed to provide mutual support and more coherent action, ranging from inter-ministerial-level policy coordination to regional project cooperation, as illustrated below. The Strategy secretariat is stimulating the development or strengthening of regional networks and platforms as part of the Strategy system, and considerable efforts are being undertaken by United Nations organizations and other international and regional organizations at the regional scale. Selected initiatives spearheaded by major regional bodies are described below.

Africa

20. The African Union Commission, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and collaborating agencies conducted regional consultations to establish a Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, in line with Hyogo Framework objectives. The Programme was approved by ministers of the region and adopted by the Executive Council of the African Union in January 2006. The Commission followed up with regional economic communities, other development partners and the Strategy secretariat to help determine their respective roles and commitments for the implementation of the Programme.

21. On the basis of those agreements, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development designed a training package for national authorities, in collaboration with the Strategy secretariat, for the Horn of Africa. The Economic Community of West African States drafted a common disaster reduction policy and mechanism on the basis of expert consultations in the region. The Southern African Development Community set up a task force to evaluate and revise the implementation of its disaster management strategy, taking into account new global practices and the guidelines of the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Strategy. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) supported a framework for a Central African Disaster Management Centre in Brazzaville for capacity-building.

Asia

22. To mobilize higher-level commitment to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework in Asia, the Government of China and the Strategy secretariat organized the second Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Beijing in September 2005. Participants from 42 Asian and South Pacific countries and 13 United Nations and international agencies adopted the Beijing Action for

Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia, which emphasizes the urgent need to strengthen national multisectoral platforms for disaster reduction and to enhance regional cooperation in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. Follow-up discussions, focusing on tools and guidelines for concrete and practical measures, were held in the Republic of Korea during the annual Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction, held on the theme "Towards the realization of the strategic goals of the Hyogo Framework for Action", convened by the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre.

23. The Asia Partnership of the Strategy, a joint effort of United Nations, regional and non-governmental organizations (including UNDP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Bangkok-based Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre and the Kobe-based Asian Disaster Reduction Centre), is developing into a regional platform for coordination and information-sharing in support of national initiatives, facilitated by the regional unit of the Strategy.

The Pacific

24. Pacific Island Governments endorsed the Madang Framework for Action 2005-2015. Over the next three years, national action plans will be developed with support from the Pacific Disaster Risk Management Partnership Network, an initiative involving United Nations and other international organizations, governmental and intergovernmental bodies, scientific institutions and non-governmental organizations. A regional information database is being established as a joint initiative of the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission, UNDP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The Americas

25. Inter-agency coordination has been strengthened with the establishment of a sub-group, led by the Strategy, within the existing Regional Task Force for Risk, Emergency and Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, convened by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Initial outputs include the identification of target countries for the development of national platforms, the publication of policy papers for key sectors, joint participation at the fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City, and the development of common strategies for education and biennial campaigns.

26. The Coordination Centre for the Prevention of National Disasters in Central America formulated a Regional Programme for Disaster Reduction in Central America, 2006-2015. The National Committees of the Centre are being restructured and will fulfil the role of national platforms. The Centre collaborated with partners to strengthen municipal capacities to manage disaster prevention information.

27. Member States of the secretariat of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States are implementing a regional disaster reduction programme with support from the United States Agency for International Development. The European Commission is increasing its support for the Caribbean in the areas of good governance, disaster management and poverty eradication. The Commission is also supporting disaster prevention programmes for the Andean region through the Andean Community, and in Central America.

Europe

28. Following initiatives under the European and EuroMediterranean Major Hazards Agreement, and with the theme "Protecting societies from disasters through preparedness and prevention: a political priority", the 2006 Ministerial Session of the Council of Europe is expected to endorse the implementation of the Hyogo Framework, in particular in the areas of education and early warning.

29. Coordinated by the Inter-State Council for Emergencies of Natural and Technological Origin, based in the Russian Federation, the Commonwealth of Independent States carried out national, regional (Commonwealth-wide) and interregional (Europe and Asia) scientific and technical studies and programmes addressing natural and technological hazards in the period from 2001 to 2006. The focus has been on risk analysis and risk management, resulting in the analysis and harmonization of national legislative frameworks. Research results will be integrated into new early warning programmes.

C. Action at the international level

30. Many United Nations agencies, other international organizations and financial institutions increased their participation in the Strategy system and their commitment to use the Hyogo Framework as an instrument for the internal alignment of their work programme priorities with respect to disaster risk reduction. The Strategy strengthening process, described in the present report, has helped to clarify the responsibilities of the main international organizations and to build more effective collaborative efforts towards substantive implementation of the Hyogo Framework. Nevertheless, significant obstacles still must be overcome to systematically identify and respond to Member States' needs and to apply the full technical capacities and financial resources of the United Nations and other international organizations.

Priority 1: disaster risk reduction as a priority with a strong institutional basis

31. The World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank addressed disaster reduction in their environmental assessment tools and policy guidelines. In June 2006, the World Bank approved a new Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, which will support national capacity-building in 86 high-risk countries and enhance the speed and efficiency of international assistance for disaster recovery operations. It will promote global and regional advocacy and information-sharing through consultations, information management tools and the exchange of good practices between countries as part of the strengthening of the Strategy system. It will support activities to mainstream hazard risk management in poverty reduction and economic growth strategies in low- and middle-income countries, synchronized with national planning processes (e.g., risk assessment reports and regional and national plans of action for risk reduction, early warning strategies and catastrophic risk financing initiatives). Thirty-two countries prone to multiple disaster risks have been identified in the initial phase under the new Facility.

32. To assist United Nations country teams in integrating disaster reduction into common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, UNDP and the Strategy secretariat, together with an inter-agency group, developed a set of guidelines that were adopted by the United Nations

Development Group and applied to United Nations joint programming processes in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The Development Group Programme Review Group later updated the guidelines and will provide them to the 30 countries adopting new Development Assistance Frameworks in 2006 and 2007, and will continue to enhance the guidelines through inter-agency consultation.

33. In support of those efforts, the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery initiated a global initiative for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction to support the development of appropriate policies, tools and human resource capacity for country-level mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and to provide a platform for advocacy and the exchange of mainstreaming experiences.

34. The United Nations inter-agency Disaster Management Training Programme, in collaboration with the Strategy secretariat and UNDP, organized a meeting in February 2006 on capacity-development as a cross-cutting element in the implementation of the five priorities of the Hyogo Framework. The meeting produced a set of core principles to guide capacity development for Framework implementation plans. The production of relevant training materials is under way. The Programme will support country efforts to build capacity in disaster reduction.

35. In 2005, the World Health Assembly urged Member States to engage actively in collective measures to establish global and regional preparedness plans that integrate risk reduction into the health sector and build capacity to respond to health-related crises. The institutionalization of disaster reduction programmes in the health ministries of disaster-prone countries was included as an objective, at the 2006 World Health Assembly, in a resolution on emergency preparedness and response.

Priority 2: risk assessment and early warning

36. UNDP and the ProVention Consortium launched an inter-institutional framework, called the Global Risk Identification Programme, to provide systematic assessments of disaster risks and losses in high-risk countries and to improve the risk evidence base for the prioritization of disaster reduction strategies at the national, regional and global levels. A number of other agencies, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, Columbia University, the Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters, UNEP, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute, the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre and the Latin American Network for Disaster Prevention, have contributed to the establishment of a formal programme and network. Projects are in preparation in some 10 to 15 disaster-prone countries.

37. At the request of the Secretary-General, the Strategy secretariat coordinated a survey[2] of existing capacities and gaps in current early warning systems, in collaboration with a multi-party working group co-chaired by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The survey found that considerable progress had been made in developing the knowledge and technical tools required to assess risks, and to generate and communicate forecasts and warnings. However, in many developing countries warning systems lacked basic equipment, skills and financial resources.

[2] See: http://www.unisdr.org/ppew/info-resources/ewc3/Global-Survey-of-Early-Warning-Systems.pdf.

Systems were often non-existent for certain hazards, such as tsunamis and landslides. A key finding concerned developing and developed nations alike: the weakest elements in the early warning chain were the dissemination of warnings and the preparedness to respond.

38. The survey recommended that Governments build national people-centred early warning systems including through multi-party round tables on early warning, developing national plans based on capacity surveys and defining warning dissemination strategies that follow community-based approaches. It also recommended that a comprehensive global early warning system be built based on existing capacities, and noted that the institutional foundations for a global early warning system required strengthened international and regional mechanisms for governance, coordination and support, including through more explicit responsibilities for various United Nations and other international agencies in the technical, humanitarian and development fields.

39. WMO, as part of its new cross-cutting Programme on Natural Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, initiated national and regional surveys, supported by national meteorological and hydrological services, to map current capabilities and gaps in scientific and technical capacities and networks for monitoring, detecting, forecasting and warning in relation to meteorological, hydrological and climate-related hazards.

40. The Third International Conference on Early Warning, held in Bonn in March 2006, was hosted by the Government of Germany under United Nations auspices (see http://www.ewc3.org). The Conference outcomes included a checklist of good practice in early warning and a compendium of more than 100 early warning projects, one of which, an early warning communications system for Tonga, was awarded the first Munich Re Foundation Early Warning Prize. The Strategy Platform for Promotion of Early Warning is promoting the projects and maintains the project database (see http://www.unisdr.org/ppew/). Participants emphasized the role of local communities in effective early warning rather than focusing exclusively on technological solutions, and reiterated that effective early warning must be an integral part of disaster reduction strategies in national development frameworks.

41. During the Conference, the Strategy secretariat and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission convened a round table on Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Response Systems with the participation of former United States President Clinton, United Nations Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery. The round table brought together Governments from the Indian Ocean region, donors and technical agencies, and saw the launch by a consortium of Strategy system partners of a consolidated advisory package for national action plans aimed at interested Governments of tsunami-affected countries.[3]

42. WMO followed up the Conference by convening an international symposium for multidisciplinary experts on the theme "Multi-hazard early warning systems for integrated disaster risk management". Participants discussed gaps with regard to the

[3] The partners are UNESCO-IOC, WMO, OCHA, IFRC, UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank. For more information on the tsunami early warning system for the Indian Ocean countries, see A/61/87-E/2006/77; http://ioc3.unesco.org/indotsunami/ and http://www.unisdr.org/ppew/tsunami/ppew-tsunami.htm.

four elements of early warning: (a) risk identification and integration in warnings; (b) technical capacities for monitoring, detecting and forecasting hazards; (c) communication and dissemination of warnings; and (d) integration of warnings in emergency planning and preparedness processes. Major shortcomings and recommendations were identified at all levels in the interface between agencies and disciplines.

43. The database on disasters maintained by the Centre for Research on Epidemiology of Disasters (see http://www.em-dat.net) remains the most widely used public source of data on disaster losses. A demand-driven Internet resource centre, for practical use by and guidance to institutions and individuals involved in disaster prevention, response, mitigation and recovery, is also being developed by the Centre, together with selected disaster-prone Asian countries and the secretariat of the Association of South-East Asian Nations.

44. The UNITAR Operational Satellite Applications Programme of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research has developed and tested satellite-derived mapping for risk and vulnerability. The European Space Agency supported the launch of pilot initiatives to assist local planning in risk-prone developing countries (see http://unosat.web.cern.ch/unosat/).

Priority 3: building a culture of safety and resilience

45. Within the Strategy system, a cluster/platform on knowledge of and education for disaster risk reduction was formed in November 2005. It is convened by UNESCO and composed of national and regional institutions, representatives of civil society and United Nations entities. It was created to map initiatives for integrating education for disaster risk reduction into school curricula and improving the safety of school buildings. The cluster/platform supports the Strategy campaign on education with the production of educational materials. UNESCO is gearing its scientific and educational programmes towards the promotion of science, education and learning in the common pursuit of disaster risk reduction in the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

46. A review commissioned by ActionAid, on behalf of the cluster/platform, entitled "Let our children teach us! A review of the role of education and knowledge in disaster risk reduction", revealed progress and shortcomings in topics ranging from research and training to primary schools and media treatment of disaster risk reduction. Priorities identified include: (a) teaching hazards and risk reduction in schools; (b) schools as centres for community-based disaster risk reduction; and (c) physical protection of schools from natural hazards. Major constraints remain low pay and support for teachers, issues also targeted by the Millennium Development Goals.

47. The United Nations Centre for Regional Development is currently promoting a participatory programme entitled "Reducing vulnerability of school children to earthquakes" in the Asia-Pacific region in collaboration with national and regional institutions. The experience currently gained in pilot projects in Fiji, India, Indonesia and Uzbekistan will be disseminated to other regions through workshops.

48. The Strategy campaign for 2006 and 2007, "Disaster risk reduction begins at school", aims at informing and mobilizing Governments, communities and individuals to integrate disaster risk reduction into school curricula in high-risk

countries and build or retrofit school buildings to withstand natural hazards. The Strategy cluster/platform partners, UNESCO, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, ActionAid and the Council of Europe are contributing knowledge and expertise and are linking their initiatives to the campaign. Campaign activities will be continued under the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The next Strategy campaign, in 2007 and 2008, will focus on health and hospital safety, and is being prepared in coordination with the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization and other partners.

49. Japanese institutions, the Strategy secretariat and other international and regional actors promoted an international framework and cooperation mechanism to develop an interactive disaster reduction hyperbase to gather, analyse and disseminate appropriate and applicable technologies and tools to reduce vulnerability and enhance disaster risk management. The Earthquake Megacities Initiative and the Pacific Disaster Centre have developed the Megacities Sound Practice Knowledge Base, a collection of about 40 sound practices from nine cities, and a library and a reference source with risk scenarios for megacities risk managers (see http://www.pdc.org/emi).

50. UNEP is implementing a project to harness indigenous knowledge in conservation and disaster management in Africa and to promote its application to complement scientific knowledge for biodiversity conservation, environmental resource management, early warning, coping strategies, poverty alleviation and traditional medicinal practices.

Priority 4: reduction of underlying risk factors

51. The fourth priority for action requires considerable sector involvement and a strong development approach. Work has been done in the areas of the environment (led by UNEP), food security (led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), health (led by WHO) and community-based risk and management (spearheaded by organizations such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the United Nations Centre for Regional Development). Substantial efforts are needed to address the vulnerability of buildings, critical facilities, urban risks, environmental management practices and social protection.

52. To broaden support for integrated flood management, which is aimed at maximizing the benefits from flood plains and minimizing loss of life, WMO and UNESCO launched the International Flood Initiative, in collaboration with other partners. The initiative fosters research, education, communication and capacity-building for the reduction of water hazards.

53. The participation and shared responsibility of the private sector to reduce disaster risk is gaining momentum. The Strategy secretariat, in cooperation with the World Bank, the ProVention Consortium, the World Economic Forum, the Aga Khan Development Network and several corporations, is developing mechanisms to facilitate public-private community partnerships and collaboration for disaster reduction.

54. The Hyogo Framework calls for risk reduction measures to be incorporated into post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation processes to reduce long-term disaster

risk. The Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, in its synthesis report of July 2006, noted that in spite of high-level advocacy for "building back better", recovery efforts to rebuild homes, restore livelihoods and environment are not considering risk reduction because of the need for speedy results, the absence of risk profile analysis and insufficient geo-technical and engineering skills. Implementing agencies and governmental bodies often lack a comprehensive understanding of the livelihoods and coping strategies of local communities, including the use of volunteerism.

55. Since its launch in Kobe, Japan, in May 2005, many more agencies and countries have joined the International Recovery Platform, a thematic platform of the Strategy system (see http://www.recoveryplatform.org). An evidence-based study, derived from an analysis of international recovery experiences, has been prepared with a view to providing guidance to policymakers and recovery practitioners. Training and capacity-development activities will start in Latin America in 2006, supported by the Turin Centre of the International Labour Organization.

56. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee identified early recovery as one of nine clusters needing attention in a review of humanitarian assistance performance. The early recovery cluster approach was first tested in Pakistan after the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, and later after the 2006 Yogjakarta earthquake. A real-time evaluation in Pakistan showed that many challenges remain to integrate long-term, risk reduction perspectives in the early phases of life-saving humanitarian assistance. The cluster and the International Recovery Platform are working closely within the Strategy system to develop joint tools to facilitate the incorporation of risk reduction into recovery planning.

Priority 5: strengthened disaster preparedness and response

57. The impact of disasters can be substantially reduced if authorities and communities in hazard-prone areas are well prepared. International initiatives by the humanitarian community are geared increasingly towards that challenge. Led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee are identifying generic indicators, benchmarks and related guidance material to facilitate, monitor and measure the impact of interventions to strengthen at-risk communities' resilience and capacities to deal with disaster events. The recent adoption by the Committee of the In-Country Self Assessment Tool for Natural Disaster Response Preparedness provided a focus for promoting concrete actions in disaster response preparedness. The tool has been widely disseminated and is being piloted in Armenia. The Committee's sub-working group on preparedness and contingency planning issues quarterly reports on early warning for inter-agency use and maintains the Humanitarian Early Warning Service website (see http://www.hewsweb.org).

58. Many organizations are restructuring their preparedness programmes in line with the Hyogo Framework. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continued efforts to advance a holistic and systematic approach to disaster response preparedness. The new FAO programme on emergency and post-crisis management is aimed at enhancing livelihoods, reducing vulnerability, increasing self-reliance and enabling an exit from food aid. FAO is also developing a strategy to enhance international cooperation in wildland fires, in cooperation with the Global Fire Monitoring Centre, the United States Forest Service, the Global

Wildland Fire Network and other international partners,[4] including through a voluntary and legally non-binding fire management code, aimed at land-use policymakers, planners and fire managers. WHO will carry out a global survey of the health emergency preparedness status in all developing countries receiving WHO technical assistance. The United Nations Volunteers programme is incorporating volunteerism for disaster reduction as a key area of action and assigned United Nations Volunteers to support the Strategy outreach units in Bangkok and Nairobi. The World Food Programme has strengthened its preparedness and technical support capacity.

D. Strategy secretariat activities to support the Hyogo Framework

59. In response to specific requests within the Hyogo Framework, including to facilitate the generation of systematic information and indicators on disasters and disaster reduction, the Strategy secretariat has taken steps, in consultation with Strategy system partners, to develop the following Strategy system support capacities: (a) a matrix of commitments and initiatives to describe and promote contributions by agencies and organizations; (b) draft guidelines for national actors on key steps towards implementing the Hyogo Framework; (c) guidance on reporting and the development of indicators of progress in disaster risk reduction; (d) the prototype of a Web-based clearing house called, "PreventionWeb"; and (e) regional outreach to national actors. The secretariat also coordinated activities to strengthen the Strategy system to support the Hyogo Framework, as described below.

60. Other main focuses of secretariat work include: guidance on mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into development frameworks and poverty reduction strategies; linkages between education and risk reduction; development of early warning systems; linkages between climate change policy and disaster reduction; and support for Strategy thematic platforms (e.g., clusters and working groups) addressing specific priority areas of the Hyogo Framework (see http://www.unisdr.org).[5]

E. Strengthening the Strategy system

61. An extensive consultation with Strategy partners and national organizations provided the basis for the strengthening of the institutional framework of the Strategy, as outlined in the previous report to the General Assembly on its implementation (A/60/180). That process is being led by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, as chair of the Strategy system, and is also guided by the outcome of the 2005 World Summit, which called for a more energetic and coherent pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals. The main aims are to widen

[4] The Draft Fire Management Code is provided for feedback until 31 October 2006 at http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/35488/en.

[5] Existing Strategy working groups include: environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction; and drought risk reduction; thematic platforms include the Platform for Promotion of Early Warning, the International Recovery Platform, the International Research Centre on the El Niño Phenomenon, a global wildland fire monitoring network and a cluster/platform on knowledge and education for disaster risk reduction.

the participation of Governments and organizations in the Strategy system, to raise the profile of disaster reduction in the priorities and programmes of organizations, and to build a stronger, more systematic and coherent international effort to support national disaster reduction activities. The strengthened Strategy system will add value through coordination, greater political awareness of disaster reduction at the highest levels and the creation of a global disaster reduction movement, coupled with an output-oriented, high-impact joint work programme for the Strategy system.

62. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, at its twelfth and latest session, in November 2005, established a small reference group, which met several times during 2006, to develop guidance for the first session of the Global Platform and for the design of a Strategy joint work programme. The Strategy secretariat organized briefings of regional partners in Bangkok, Nairobi, and Panama City to widen understanding of and inputs to the Strategy strengthening process.

63. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs convened an advisory group of senior managers from the United Nations Development Group, the World Bank, WMO and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, termed the "preliminary Management Oversight Board". It supports the chair in providing system-wide leadership and high-level advocacy for disaster risk reduction. It contributes to building a stronger base of support among key international Strategy partners, provides advice on the strengthening process and advocates sound investments in disaster reduction.

64. The self-organized Strategy Support Group met on several occasions over the year in an extended form open to interested Member States, to provide active support to the Under-Secretary-General and the Strategy secretariat on the Strategy system strengthening process, particularly in respect to resource mobilization and interaction with Governments in United Nations Member States. The Government of Switzerland currently chairs the Group.

65. A core element in the strengthened Strategy system is the arrangement for a successor to the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction, to be named the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Global Platform will have a wide membership, open to all Member States; United Nations agencies, funds and programmes; international financial institutions; the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement; other international and regional organizations; non-governmental organizations; academia; and the private sector active in disaster reduction. The Global Platform will serve as the global policy forum for disaster reduction, provide strategic guidance and coherence for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework, share experience among stakeholders and prepare recommendations for United Nations governing bodies. Preparations are under way for the first session of the Global Platform in mid-2007. The Global Platform will set up a programme advisory committee to prepare and monitor the implementation of the joint work programme of the Strategy system. A science and technology committee will be formed to guide and strengthen the scientific and technical basis of the Strategy. Thematic groups and platforms will continue to support different areas of work.

66. As part of the strengthening process, the Strategy secretariat revised and adapted its structure and work programme to better support the implementation of the Hyogo Framework. Functions include servicing the Global Platform and its various subsidiary entities; coordinating the development of policy-related tools; acting as a clearing house for knowledge and best practices; supporting regional

processes and national platforms for disaster reduction; advocating a worldwide culture of risk reduction; supporting resource mobilization; and serving as the focal point within the United Nations system for promoting and harmonizing policies and activities for disaster reduction.

67. One result of the stronger interaction within the Strategy system over the period covered by the present report is the initiative assembled by a consortium of Strategy partners[6] to support Indian Ocean Governments in the development of their tsunami early warning capabilities through a consolidated advisory package. Ten Member States have requested assistance under the initiative.

F. Investing in disaster risk reduction

68. As described in the present report, a shared will is emerging to tackle the challenges of disaster reduction and to improve the mechanisms for cooperation at the global, regional and national levels. The new phase requires moving beyond piecemeal and limited funding approaches to more sustained investment in risk reduction by Member States and donors, including through allocations from the United Nations regular budget, coupled with more systematic and coherent programmes of work measured by their performance and results. The Strategy joint work programme and budget, to be launched by the Global Platform in 2007, represents an important step forward to achieve complementary and coherent action among international organizations in that direction by the Strategy system.

69. During its presidency of the Group of Eight and the European Union in 2005, the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland pledged to allocate to disaster reduction the equivalent of 10 per cent of the funding it provides in response to disasters, which represents a welcome and innovative investment strategy for disaster risk reduction. In a similar spirit, the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office has funded disaster resilience alongside its response to the flash humanitarian appeal for the Kashmir earthquake, utilizing the Strategy system for implementation. Sweden has done the same in the context of the flash appeal for the drought in the Horn of Africa. Other donors are currently reviewing their assistance policies along those lines.

70. Realignments of the policies of international financial institutions are important to support the mainstreaming of disaster reduction into development investment. The aforementioned World Bank Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery is investing in the Strategy system to develop a coordinated approach.

71. Disaster reduction needs to be recognized as a development objective and a target for development assistance funding. In its ongoing dialogue with donors, including in the framework of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Strategy secretariat will continue to advocate the allocation of a benchmarked proportion of overseas development assistance to disaster reduction. It will promote the need for structured multi-year partnerships with donors to finance the Strategy system joint work programme and it will work to correct the current situation, whereby contributions for the Strategy secretariat are not recognized as official development assistance, a disincentive for donors.

[6] See para. 42 for more details.

72. In 2005 and 2006, the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction, which supports the secretariat and the Strategy system, received contributions from the Governments of China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Madagascar, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, as well as from the European Commission and from various private donors. The Strategy secretariat has taken steps towards establishing a disaster reduction resource tracking system to monitor and publish reports on global funding flows, linked to analyses of needs and donor policies and practices.

73. Thanks to such valuable contributions, much progress has been made. However, funding for the secretariat remains unpredictable and insufficient in the face of the growing demands from Governments and agencies for services and assistance. The core mandate, to promote and support the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction into development and humanitarian processes and to support the implementation of the Hyogo Framework, requires a commensurately predictable and stable funding base, in addition to the commitment of United Nations regular budget resources to the Strategy secretariat.

III. Reduction of vulnerability to severe climate-related hazards

74. In its resolution 60/146, entitled "Natural disasters and vulnerability", the General Assembly encouraged the Inter-Agency Task Force to make available to the relevant United Nations entities information on options for "disaster reduction, including severe natural hazards and extreme weather-related disasters and vulnerabilities".

75. Severe weather and climate events are the dominant hazards behind disaster statistics, reflecting both the high frequency of extreme events, such as tropical storms, floods and droughts, and the chronic vulnerabilities of many communities to extreme weather and climate. The impact of a warmer climate is increasingly evident, particularly in the retreat of glaciers and changes in polar ecosystems. The past two years have seen the occurrence of unusual extreme events, for example in the intensity and location of tropical cyclones. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will provide an updated assessment of those changes and their consequences in 2007. Many States are developing strategies and measures to reduce their vulnerability to climate variability and change, for example through national adaptation programmes of action, under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and by integrating measures to reduce climate risk into development programmes and assistance. Such initiatives reflect a growing awareness of the fact that some climate change impact is inevitable and that countries must reduce their vulnerability, drawing on disaster reduction experience.

76. Efforts by the Strategy secretariat and its partners to promote the converging goals of disaster reduction and climate change adaptation at the international level include providing updates on progress in disaster reduction at meetings of the Framework Convention and sharing of knowledge and tools, contributing to reviewing the draft fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, linking climate change focal points to national platforms, and providing guidance for Member States' national communications. The Strategy

secretariat and many of its partners have been formally recognized as organizations of relevance to the work of the Framework Convention Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice. The Vulnerability and Adaptation Resource Group, an informal group of donor agencies and Strategy partners, is undertaking studies in Kenya, Mexico, and Viet Nam to identify existing disaster reduction processes and activities that may be incorporated into climate change adaptation programmes.

77. Over the last two years, the El Niño phenomenon has not exhibited major fluctuations of the type that devastated many countries in 1997 and 1998. Scientific institutions have continued to closely monitor the Pacific Ocean, home to the primary sources of the El Niño/La Niña phenomena, for signs of changes that might lead to either an El Niño, or its opposite La Niña event. Consultations with the global forecast centres and other experts from around the world are coordinated by WMO, leading to the periodic issuance of its El Niño/La Niña update.

78. Historical patterns show that the El Niño phenomenon is likely to reoccur and have a major impact. Therefore, effective preparations need to be maintained and developed during such quiet years, so that when the next major event eventually occurs, societies will be more resilient and able to manage it with fewer losses of life and economic and social assets.

79. In response to General Assembly resolution 59/232, encouraging the strengthening of the International Research Centre on the El Niño Phenomenon, the Centre undertakes three types of activities: (a) monitoring and analysing the El Niño phenomenon through collaboration with international monitoring centres, (b) enhancing regional and international recognition and support for the Centre and (c) developing tools for decision makers and Government authorities to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon. The Centre produces regionally coordinated monthly seasonal forecasts within the framework of the Climate Outlook Forum for Western South America and, under WMO guidance, cooperates in the exchange of information with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Climate Prediction and Applications Centre in Nairobi and the Beijing Climate Centre of the Chinese Meteorological Agency. It has formalized partnerships with several national oceanographic institutions of south-eastern Pacific countries.

80. In collaboration with Andean national meteorological and hydrological services, the Centre developed several regional project proposals to improve climate information and forecast services and enhance climate risk management in the region, including climate variability, hazards in the areas of agriculture, health and water management, training on climate information and the development of new information tools (see http://www.ciifen-int.org).

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

81. The increasing devastation caused by natural hazards in recent years underlines the pressing need for Member States and international organizations to take decisive action to substantially reduce disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries, and to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action. Capacities and concerted efforts in disaster risk reduction need to be developed with a strong sense of priority and urgency, to break the vicious circle between poverty, accelerated urbanization, environmental

degradation and natural hazards, and to protect development gains and future generations. Disaster risk reduction must be more decisively incorporated as an essential component of all development strategies, policies, programmes and investments for national and local governments.

82. Progressive moves to strengthen the Strategy system's role to spearhead, coordinate and advocate disaster reduction efforts include the evolution of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction into a wider Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction open to all Member States, in addition to international, regional and non-governmental organizations active in disaster reduction, as the strategic forum for policy guidance and concerted action on disaster reduction at all levels.

Strengthening of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system

83. **The Secretary-General invites the General Assembly to endorse the processes under way to strengthen the Strategy system and invites Member States to actively engage in the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and other Strategy mechanisms.**

Strengthening of national and local capacities

84. **Member States and organizations are encouraged to develop strong national and local capacities to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action, including national platforms for disaster reduction, and effective regional and international supporting mechanisms. Member States are encouraged to establish programmes and reporting systems in support of their disaster reduction initiatives, to monitor their achievements and to share their reports through the Strategy system.**

Investing in disaster risk reduction

85. **The Secretary-General encourages donors and funding institutions to systematically invest in disaster risk reduction as an integral and targeted component of humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. Governments should also consider setting targets for public spending on multi-year disaster risk reduction programmes at national and regional levels.**

Strategy funding arrangements

86. **The Secretary-General, considering the substantially increased responsibilities of the Strategy secretariat and the need for commensurately predictable and stable financial resources, invites the General Assembly to reconsider the secretariat's current funding exclusively from extrabudgetary resources and recommends that the commitment to disaster reduction by the United Nations be reflected through an allocation of resources from its regular budget to the Strategy secretariat. The Secretary-General also calls on Member States and Strategy stakeholders to augment their financial contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction to ensure adequate support for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.**

Reduction of vulnerability to severe climate-related hazards

87. **To better cope with hydro-meteorological hazards now and in the future, the Secretary-General recommends that Member States invest more in climate monitoring and associated hazard risk management and risk reduction activities, and expressly include disaster reduction as part of their policies and programmes for adaptation to climate change. Member States and organizations are encouraged to develop a global early warning system for all hazards and all communities, based on existing systems, and to address the associated technical and organizational gaps and needs, as recommended in the Global Survey of Early Warning Systems.**

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General Assembly

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Sixty-first session
Item 54 (b) of the provisional list*
Globalization and interdependence: international migration and development

Letter dated 31 March 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach hereto the declaration adopted at the close of the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries on Migrants' Remittances, held in Cotonou on 9 and 10 February 2006 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would arrange for this letter and its annex to be circulated as documents of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, under item 54 (b) of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Simon B. **Idohou**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau
of the Least Developed Countries

* A/61/150

06-46053 (E) 100806 110806

Annex to the letter dated 31 March 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries on Migrants' Remittances

Ministerial Declaration

Cotonou, 10 February 2006

We, Ministers and Heads of delegations of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), having met on 9 and 10 February 2006 in Cotonou, at the Ministerial Conference of the Least Developed Countries on Migrants' Remittances;

Recalling the Millennium Declaration and, more particularly the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), aiming at achieving extreme poverty reduction;

Recalling the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on LDCs that was held in Brussels in May 2001 and which resulted in the adoption of the Programme of Action of the LDCs for the Decade 2001-2010;

Recalling the Monterrey Consensus;

Recalling the outcome of the Ministerial Conference organized in August 2002 in Cotonou on the theme: "Implementation of the Programme of Action of the LDCs and the fight against Poverty";

Recalling the outcome of the High Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council of June 2004 in New York, and the round table on the theme: "Enhancing the development impact of remittances of the LDCs";

Underscoring the importance and the economic and social value of funds remitted by migrants and the Diaspora;

Reaffirming the necessity to identify the areas of priority action for Governments and other actors in order to facilitate the flow of remittances, and enhance their development impact in LDCs, while respecting the private nature of these flows;

In light of the thematic presentations made during the Ministerial conference and given the rich debates generated;

Aware of the need to work jointly and in synergy to contribute effectively and efficiently in the global fight against poverty;

Clarifying the fact that enhancing the development impact of remittances is by no way an encouragement or signal for skilled labour to leave LDCs and migrate to developed countries;

Recognizing the importance of sharing and transfer of knowledge, capacities, and good practices in the area of remittances between LDCs and other developing countries within South-South cooperation

Note the importance of the migratory phenomenon in a globalized world that takes into account the flow of migrants of the LDCs;

Recognize the importance of migrant remittances as well as their impact on the development of migrant countries of origin, while emphasizing that remittances are not a substitute for official development assistance;

Appeal to Governments of the LDCs to put in place a migration policy and an enabling environment that include migrants' education and training and aim at encouraging investment from migrants;

Urge the Governments of countries of origin and receiving countries of migrants, national, regional and international financial and banking Institutions, United Nations System Organizations and other appropriate Institutions, Organizations and Bodies working in the area of the building of an inclusive financial system in the LDCs, as well as the Diaspora and NGOs to :

- √ work together in reinforcing the institutional framework for remittances;
- √ promote inter-state and inter-institutional cooperation between countries of origin and receiving countries;
- √ seek and establish safe ways and means for migrants to transfer their remittances to countries of origin;

- √ seek lasting solutions for the enhancement of the impact of remittances on development;

5. **Foster** initiatives aiming at better organizing movement of migrant workers' so that receiving countries and countries of origin could derive mutual benefits;

6. **Urge** Governments and financial institutions to develop financial products to attract migrant savings and investments;

7. **Urge** Governments of host countries to consider introducing tax relief for remittances similar to tax incentives provided for investment funds and charitable donations;

8. **Request** the International Organisation for Migration and other relevant organisations to further support the LDCS in the effective implementation of "Migration for Development" Programmes;

9. **Underscore** the importance for Governments of creating an enabling environment for enhancing the development impact of remittances by:

   - √ Developing capacity, instruments and institutions to maximize the potential of remittances in the development of the LDCs
   - √ Building inclusive financial sector that links remittances to other forms of financial intermediation including microfinance and safety net mechanisms as well as creation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
   - √ Engaging Diasporas and Home Town Associations (HTAs) in national development process of LDCs
   - √ Improving data collection and knowledge base of remittances in the LDCs
   - √ Strengthening Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), with a view to reducing transaction costs of remittances and improving access to banking and financial products and services

10. **Encourage** the formation of migrants' associations and promote sensitization among migrants regarding development programmes in their countries of origin;

11. **Recognize** the importance of South-South migration and invite the countries and regional Organisations involved to facilitate the movement of persons and promote a better efficiency of remittances mechanisms;

12. **Invite** host countries, in particular the developed countries to adopt migration policies that take into account the MDGs and to improve the efficiency of migrants' remittances mechanisms;

13. **Recommend** the establishment of a "Migrant Remittances Observatory for LDCs".

14. **Favourably** welcome the offer of the Government of the Republic of Benin to host the head office of the "International Migrant Remittances Observatory for LDCs";

15. **Request** the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and other relevant organisations to support the establishment and operationalisation of this Observatory as soon as possible;

16. **Request** the United Nations Office of High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island developing States (UN-OHRLLS) to include the recommendations of the conference in its awareness raising and advocacy on the special needs of the LDCs ;

17. **Request** that this Declaration be brought to the attention of the High Level Meeting on the comprehensive review of the implementation of the programme of Action of the LDCs for the decade 2001-2010 at the sixty first session of the General Assembly in New York on 19 and 20 September 2006;

18. **Invite** all Countries, Organizations and Institutions involved or interested in the issue of migrant remittances to work actively and jointly to the effective and quick implementation of recommendations and decisions of this Cotonou Conference.

19. **Decide** to put in place a Ministerial Committee and a Technical Committee responsible for monitoring the implementation of the recommendations and decisions of this Conference.

20. **Request** Benin, the Chair of the LDCs group, to circulate the Ministerial Declaration as the official document of the United Nations, and submit it as an input to the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development to be held in New York on 14 and 15 September 2006

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Sixty-first session

Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the sixty-first session

Financing of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Secretary-General has the honour to request, pursuant to rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly of an additional item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste".

2. Owing to the nature of the item, the Secretary-General further requests that it be allocated to the Fifth Committee.

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Sixty-first session

Request for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the sixty-first session

Requests for observer status in the General Assembly

Letter dated 8 September 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request, pursuant to rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the General Assembly of an additional item entitled "Requests for observer status in the General Assembly".

In view of the legal nature of the issue, I believe it would be appropriate to allocate the item to the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly.

Pursuant to rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, this request is accompanied by an explanatory memorandum (see annex).

(*Signed*) Christian **Wenaweser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

06-49437 (E) 110906

Annex

Explanatory memorandum

The General Committee of the sixty-first session has before it, once again, requests for the inclusion of agenda items related to the granting of observer status in the General Assembly (A/61/141 and A/61/191). Agenda items relating to this issue are allocated to the Sixth Committee, which then deals with the substance of the matter. In fact, dealing with the question of observer status has become a standard activity of the Sixth Committee.

The current practice of including a specific agenda item for every single organization requesting observer status in the General Assembly seems unnecessarily burdensome and bureaucratic. On a number of occasions in the past, the General Committee had to schedule a separate meeting for no other purpose than the inclusion of such a specific agenda item, which is mainly administrative in nature.

The Liechtenstein delegation notes that many other delegations have criticized this practice. In the spirit of revitalization of the General Assembly and its working methods, it would indeed be simpler if the Sixth Committee could deal with the merits of such requests directly, without the need to involve the General Committee in every single such request.

The Liechtenstein delegation therefore submits a request to include a generic item on this matter in the agenda of the General Assembly, and to allocate it to the Sixth Committee.

The generic agenda item would be entitled "Requests for observer status in the General Assembly". It would replace, for the sixty-first session, the two related items requested for inclusion in the agenda (A/61/141 and A/61/191), and make it unnecessary in the future to bring specific requests for observer status to the General Committee. Such requests would have to be brought to the attention of the Sixth Committee directly.

06-49437